

# LINGUISTICS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING: THE IMPLICATIONS FOR MODERN HEBREW

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## 1.

TODAY, AS MUCH AS EVER, language teaching theorists and course writers offer a rich array of wares.

The audiolingual approach, concerned with the formation of habits, particularly grammatical ones, by inductive pattern drills, competes with cognitive approaches, which aim to develop the four language skills through conscious understanding of structure. Far less concerned with grammar are the newly emerged (or re-emerged) "communicative" or "functional" approaches; these organize language in terms of the functions it is felt most vitally to fulfil, e.g. such acts as suggestions or warnings, such situations or topics as annoyance, shopping, football.<sup>1</sup>

Linguistics has a role to play in all these frameworks. Many teachers, having had their only taste of linguistics from a course in pure linguistics of the structuralist or generative variety, may well have decided to have nothing further to do with linguists. But I mean to show that linguistics brings benefits that can transcend differences in method, with special benefit for the teaching of Modern Hebrew.

1. The audiolingual and cognitive approaches are contrasted in Chastain (1971). The communicative approach is spelled out in Wilkins (1976), Cook (1978), Littlewood (1978); and put into practice in Jones (1977) and van Ek (1977). Examples of the cognitive or communicative methods for Modern Hebrew have not as yet been forthcoming. A recent teachers' guide by Stern (1979) is in fact strongly anti-cognitive and pattern-oriented.

## 2.

The core of linguistic research is the description of languages and the way they change. Add to this the physical, psychological, and social correlates thereof. The data encompass phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and more besides.

I shall relate linguistics to four areas of deficiency in Modern Hebrew teaching: (a) the unreliability of the data; (b) the lack of interest in certain facets of language, particularly phonetics and lexicology; (c) the rigid commitment to traditional analyses, e.g. in verbal morphology; and (d) the disregard for the learnability, or indispensability to communication, of the data as they are taught, e.g. the distinction between masculine and feminine numerals.

Some of what follows, I hope, might appear so self-evident to some readers as not to merit the name "linguistics." The term tends to evoke the same scientific, not to say obscurantist, associations as "physics" or "biochemistry." But just as the passage of the earth around the sun is today conceived as common knowledge rather than physics, so yesterday's linguistics is often just tomorrow's grammar.<sup>2</sup>

## 3. Linguistics and the Data

In no sphere of language teaching has linguistics still to make its strongest impact as in the very choice of the data to be taught.

One may go further: there seems to be little awareness that a choice is being made. Few, at any rate, are prepared to admit to it. Thus, even in such "industries" as French and Spanish teaching, few course books are candid about the degree of disparity between educated colloquial (let alone substandard colloquial) and the formal written/spoken system. The former are nearly always ignored, for syntax, lexis, phonetics, morphology, and all else; and this despite the pretense that oral skill and comprehension are the main concern.<sup>3</sup>

One may at least offer the excuse that there is going to be little personal contact with French or Spanish speakers anyway. This should not apply, however, to Modern Hebrew teaching, where actual contact with Israelis, leading perhaps to Aliya, has always been a priority. Of course, there is the added consideration of the sanctity — religious or cultural — with which the concept of "correct Hebrew" has been invested. But this is indeed just a

2. It should, however, not be forgotten that modern-day linguists may still argue heatedly over the very existence of such "unquestionables" as Noun and Adjective. See, for example, Ross (1969).

3. For instance, few textbooks face up to such French constructions as *des gros souliers; ça pleut; il s'est en allé; ce qu'il l'aime!; pourquoi il fait ça?*

concept, without ever having been an organic reality, at least in anything like the sense normally intended by its proponents, as has been demonstrated by Rabin (1977). And indeed every course book for Modern Hebrew makes its own compromise with the demands of utility and simplicity, as we shall now illustrate; and this might not be a bad thing, were the learner only kept informed of what sort of Hebrew he is learning.

Linguists have long insisted that a language is a set of largely overlapping subsystems, each appropriate to a certain social setting or a certain situation, topic, or medium. See, for example, Halliday *et al.* (1964, section 4). Modern Hebrew has its fair share of such "registers." On a scale of formality, one may easily distinguish (a) the Hebrew of public addresses, formal literary prose, journalese, officialese; (b) educated written Hebrew; (c) educated deliberate spoken and familiar written Hebrew; (d) educated rapid spoken Hebrew; and (e) substandard spoken Hebrew. Further subdivision is possible.<sup>4</sup>

It seems plausible that a mixture of these registers, such as is offered by many course books, has an adverse effect on the attitude of the native interlocutor, and hence on communication as a whole. This is a matter for Hebrew sociolinguists, who have yet to pronounce on the subject. Experience suggests that what is pejoratively called *'ivrit šel šabat* ("Sabbath Hebrew"), register (a) above, is associated, in speech, with new immigrants and with the brand of Hebrew they are popularly imagined to have acquired in official language schools. This may hinder psychological absorption, particularly for immigrants in the armed forces.

Conversely, the learner who over-compensates by writing off as archaic or biblical every construction for which he has learned a colloquial alternative will find it hard to use, e.g., *'eyno*, *'eyna* etc. (rather formal negative particles) in the right context.

From a purely sociolinguistic point of view, one homogeneous register should be taught rather than a motley that is never entirely appropriate for active purposes. Passive comprehension, of course, may well call for more. And even though the need for learnability and sheer communicative minimalism could, in theory, conflict with the argument for one homogeneous register, it does, in practice, tend to support it — and not by accident. See Section 6.

4. Preliminary work on Hebrew registers appears in Blum (1978), Nir (1978), and Glinert (1979), who makes a systematic three-way classification by register of a whole range of syntactic constructions.

There are many other, non-vertical registers, such as highschool Hebrew, army Hebrew, yeshiva Hebrew. In each case, the linguist, though not perhaps the teacher, will find more interest in the subtle differences in syntax and in the abstract patterns underlying the whole choice of specialized vocabulary than in the special words themselves.

### 3.1

Mansoor's *Contemporary Hebrew* (1977), in many ways an engaging and innovative course book, purports by its very title to put the contemporary language first. The author in his preface predicts that one should be able to handle both biblical narrative and modern Hebrew prose. No advance indication is given of the type of contemporary Hebrew being offered, but, despite the bald reference to Hebrew prose, one might be forgiven for thinking that a book with so many dialogues for texts aims to teach production and comprehension of standard educated spoken Hebrew. This, however, is not the case.

#### 3.1.1

Mansoor's phonetic introduction (pp. 15–19, 26–35), though in principle a service to realism, entangles the historical, the normative, and the reality.

To call the letters *ḥet* and *ṣadi* “emphatic” is purely historical; even the demands on Israeli newscasters do not go that far. *Ḥet* and *ʾayin*, by contrast, are not “usually” pronounced like *ḵap* and *ʾalep* respectively; there are about as many who use the pharyngeal pronunciation in Israel as do not, and the only motive for choosing between the two varieties (apart from mere easiness) is that the oriental one is the prestige form for purists and the non-prestige form for practically everyone else.

The same holds for vowels (i.e. vowel symbols). While it is indeed important (p. 26) “to know which vowels are long and which are short, because this difference is relevant to many rules of grammar” (a phonologically impeccable observation), one should not confuse bygone with reality for purposes of pronunciation with coy statements like (*ibid.*) “the difference between the long and short vowels is one of quantity, of extending the sound, and is not readily distinguishable in speech.” Even the most deliberate reader makes no such length distinction today.

The discussion of the vocal *šva* (p. 29) involves the kind of generalizations that normativists are tempted to make about “modern spoken Hebrew.” To say that the vocal *šva* is “often ignored” and to cite “*bni, šlomo, yishmru, katvu*” is to ignore the fact that, in all but the most punctillious of registers (e.g. newscasters, but not even all formal addresses), the pronunciation of this *šva* is strictly geared to phonetic and morphological context. Thus, one says *tširā* but *yšmārū*, *broš* (“cypress”) but *bərōš* (“on top of”).<sup>5</sup> Failure to teach the consonant clusters of this register must at least make native speech hard to follow. I will discuss Hebrew phonetics in general in Section 4.

5. For work on clusters, see H. Rosen (1955).

As for spelling, there can be no justification sociolinguistically for the mix of plene and defective spelling here. If the aim is to accustom the student to the biblical word, he should be informed, and such words as **הָיָא** and the *qoṭel* pattern should be given in their customary biblical forms. If modern reading and writing in all but the highest register is the aim, and if dictionaries are ever to be used, a basic knowledge of plene spelling is essential.

### 3.1.2

For morphology, Mansoor follows most primers in blandly giving the past tense, 2 pl., as *šamartém* (p. 102). This places us in the register of public addresses and pedants; *šamártem* is otherwise the norm.

Similarly, the statement that (p. 143) "possessive adjectives . . . are not expressed by separate words, but by special suffixes to the noun. . . . In spoken Hebrew, the preposition **של** *of* is often used . . ." disregards the fact that (a) there are numerous syntactic and morphological situations in which *šeli*, *šelxa* etc. rather than mere suffixes are the rule in all registers; (b) more generally, there may be many linguistic contexts in which *šeli*, *šelxa* etc. are an elegant alternative to suffixation; (c) with certain inalienables, suffixation of the noun is the rule for all registers.

Case (a) has been investigated by Ornan (1968, 1973). It includes nouns that disallow suffixation, e.g. proper nouns, pronouns, many loan nouns; nouns used in certain metaphorical ways; a noun with conjoined possessives. See also Rosen (1966).

Case (b) may be illustrated from the novelist Appelfeld:

מפניו הרחבים לא ניכר שאמן הוא. דומה היה לסוחר אמיד, שוה נפש  
ויגע. על בלוק הציורים שלי עבר ביעף כבסחורה מוכרת. . . . בזכרוני  
לא נותר אלא חדרה המואר של המשרתת שלנו, לואיז. . . . כולנו לאמיתו  
של דבר נשתנינו, אך לא בשיעור שלו.

(Ma'ariv, Jan. 19, 1979)

Looking at the second instance of *šel* in particular, one can only pity the novice who thinks he has to produce the right suffix and vowel alternation for *mešar-tetenu*.

Case (c) involves *ba'al*, *'išša*, *'ab*, *'em*, *ḥam*, *ḥamot*, *inter alia*. Thus *\*haba'al šeli* ('my husband') is unacceptable in any register; *ba'ali* is required. See Glinert (1979).

Finally, to insist on the feminine plural forms of the future tense (p. 175) is to disregard not only the fact that they are limited to formal or educated written registers but also the decision of the Hebrew Language Academy not to insist on

them in "correct" Hebrew. See also Peretz (1972, p. 71) on the biblicalizing and *haskalah*-type motives for the widespread insistence on these forms.

### 3.1.3

Turning to syntax, the yes-no interrogative is taught (p. 146) without the slightest reference to the yawning gulf in register between the prefix *ha-*, *ha'im* and a question mark or rising intonation by itself. The first characterizes register (a) above, except for a handful of idioms. *ha'im* is neutral in this respect, though it probably sounds somewhat meticulous in substandard speech. A question mark or intonation by themselves are probably uncommon in registers (a) and (b). See Glinert (1979).

Although a pure sociolinguistic approach to data selection would favor *ha'im*, there are considerations of internal and contrastive simplicity, which I shall illustrate in Section 6.

As for Mansoor's presentation of vocabulary, a linguist would lay stress on the difference in register between the relative particles '*ašer*, *še-*: '*ayye* and '*eyfo* ("where"); *maddua'* and *lamma* ("why"); *me'ayin* and *me'eyfo* ("from where"). The difference is decidedly different in each case. In all probability, '*ašer* belongs to registers (a) and (b) and *še-* to (a)-(e); '*ayye* to (a) and '*eyfo* to (a)-(e); *maddua'* to (a)-(c) and *lamma* to (a)-(e); *me'ayin* to (a)-(c) and *me'eyfo* to (d) and (e). More research is a must.

## 3.2

A similar stew of norm and usages is to be found in the pronouncements and materials of official educational bodies in Israel. To judge from the history of Hebrew teaching in Haramati (1972b), this issue has never been deemed worthy of discussion. The "direct approach" and the primacy of the spoken word prevailed from the outset; but the fact that, at a certain point in time, the Hebrew teacher had perforce to exchange the mantle of revivalist for that of instructor of a living tongue seems to have passed the profession by.

The first "Proposed Teaching Program for Adult Language Teaching Institutions" of 1952 did not include so much as an oblique reference to the gap between norm and usage. The U.S. Army Method, which — as emerges from Haramati's (*ibid.*, p. 89) point-by-point comparison with the Ulpan Method — taught a syntax and phonology that was based on structuralist analysis and was hence inevitably descriptive rather than normative, was belatedly introduced to Israel in the early sixties. But it has yet to trigger a general reassessment of traditional grammatical analyses in course books and programs, let alone a

discussion of norms and usage. The recent writings by Rabin on this issue are as yet a voice in the wilderness.<sup>6</sup>

Some illustrations will bear this out. The Israel Ministry of Education's teachers' manual of 1974 opens with the declared aim of "inculcating the language as it is spoken and written in Israel today," yielding "a command of comprehension and speaking skills in everyday matters" (my translation — L.G.). But the syntax and vocabulary that follow do not live up to this. On the one hand, present tense negation by *lo* is to be taught well ahead of the formal alternative *'eyn-*; but such a notoriously difficult feature as the masculine forms of numerals over 10, which in casual speech may as safely be ignored as negation with *'eyn-*, is imposed as early as unit eight, with the equally daunting recommendation that one use the masculine cardinal forms in dates, instead of the more usual ordinal forms.

This program, in fact, leaves the situation very much as it was in the mid-fifties, when the appearance of *'Elef millim* of Aharon Rosen and Ben-Shefer partly fulfilled the former's goal, as expressed in Rosen (1964), of "not teaching the rules of normative grammar but rather inculcating the living tongue exactly as it is used" (my translation — L.G.). I say "partly fulfilled" because *'Elef millim* is a curious blend of the (almost risqué) colloquial, e.g. negation by *lo* alone, and the formal, and frequently difficult, e.g. masculine and feminine forms of all numerals by lesson eight, insistence on the feminine plural forms in the future tense and imperative and on the *šəmartém* pattern in 2 m.pl. The vocabulary too imposes a strange hybrid register.

In defence of Rosen, one might point out that the existence of discrete registers was far less evident in the mid-fifties, and the "normative grammar" he was reacting against was an obsession with inflections more than anything else.

That this situation pertains in the mid-seventies is less easy to excuse. It is largely due to the inability of the teaching profession to discriminate between the puristic goals of first language teaching, particularly powerful in Israel, and the quite separate goals of second language teaching.

6. A glance at three other recent applied linguistic anthologies—Kodesh (1971), Fischler (1975), and Fischler and Nir (1976)—shows that, of more than forty articles, just one makes even passing reference to the problem of norm and usage: that of Rabin (1971), a linguist rather than a pedagogue with access to the hearts and minds of the Hebrew teaching establishment. Addressing himself to what Ulpanim teach, why they do so, and whether they should, he considers normativism a widespread conscious ingredient, with both the colloquial and the journalistic being ignored: "... beginners are taught a Hebrew built on normative grammar and unlike any register used in actual writing in Israel or the diaspora" (my translation — L.G.). To my mind, in fact, the Hebrew teaching establishment does not have a conscious stand on the matter, whether in theory or in practice.

The precise type of normativism that is involved can be gauged perhaps from another area of Hebrew sociolinguistics that is just beginning to open up: the study of the attitudes of educators, as opposed to the performance and competence of actual speakers. Ben-Asher (1969), in interviews with fifty Israeli high school Hebrew teachers, charted their views on a range of grammatical issues — bearing in mind that their response may have been distorted by the same fear of authority that seems to have deterred some 55% from replying altogether.

The above Ministry program is in line with the grammarians and the teachers in accepting the *hup'al* (as well as the *hop'al*) pattern, and the “masculine” forms in place of the feminine plural forms for the future tense; and in tacitly avoiding *day* (“quite”) as an intensifier, *maspiq* (“enough”) as an intensifier or quantifier, and the despised *haki* (“most”). But the program deviates in not insisting on verb forms of the *šalahat* pattern (rather than *šalaht*), and in teaching the negative function of *'ap* (as in *'af pa'am lo* “never”).

A similar mix characterizes, *mirabile dictu*, the avowedly colloquial television series “*Ivrit bašman toḥ*,” sponsored in 1975 by the Ministry.

Thus the official Israeli establishment for teaching Hebrew as a second language seems to be wedded to a norm all its own — something one expects of one's pupils but neither does nor expects other native speakers to do.

However, the forthcoming teachers' guide to aspects of colloquial Hebrew syntax, sponsored by the Israel Ministry of Education, (Glinert, 1979), will, I hope, signal a change in attitude.

### 3.3

Linguistics has, fortunately, had an effect on Hebrew teaching data in a handful of cases. Rosen (1962) and Talmage, Rabin, and Garshowitz (1971) are among the American publications that distinguish formal and informal registers, both spoken and written.

## 4. Where only Linguists Dare to Tread: Phonetics and Lexicology

I have observed that yesterday's linguistics may be tomorrow's grammar; and the very act of dealing with morphology or syntax is a matter of linguistics that is now thankfully taken for granted. Not so the teaching of segmental phonetics, intonation, and lexicology.

### 4.1

Laufer's discussion of phonetics for Hebrew language teaching in Fischler and Nir (1976) is, to date, the only treatment of the matter by a professional



phonetician.<sup>7</sup> He assesses the role of phonetics and phonology in language teaching in general, urging that (a) the issue of norm and usage be decided; (b) the Hebrew being taught be phonetically analysed; (c) contrastive studies be initiated; and (d) graded drills be devised. But beyond quoting from Smally on ways of teaching velar fricatives and suggesting (from observation or impression?) that English speakers need help with initial *ts*, *kx*, *šx*, Laufer makes no move to implement his proposals.

Nor have others. There is an uncanny silence, in both official and non-official quarters in Israel, about the phonetics of Hebrew. The pressures of normativism are, to my mind, primarily to blame.

Before presenting my own proposals for phonetics in Hebrew teaching, I would like to give a short outline of this situation.

## 4.2

In 1954, at about the same time as the influential views of Aharon Rosen on the primacy of everyday spoken Hebrew were making themselves felt, an anthology for teachers by Efrat and Niv featured papers by Garbel (“‘Iqqarey hammiḥṭa ha‘ibri’”) and Peretz (“‘Hammiḥṭa ha‘ibri bəyiśra‘el’”) that bore out what Rabin (*ibid.*) has said about Hebrew teachers aiming to succeed with immigrants where they had failed with native Israelis. These two papers preached the idealized “official” pronunciation (the so-called *miḥṭa ləməpet*)—with all its pharyngals, geminate consonants, etc.—that is the actual speech of next to no one.

Little more has been heard of such proposals. Programs by the influential pedagogues Marani (1952) and Weinberg (1957) ignored pronunciation entirely. Of Aharon Rosen’s long-standing methodology for beginners, summarized in Fischler (1975), the same is true. In 1959, a collection of Hebrew teaching papers from the Ministry of Education (*Leqet ma‘amarim biḥə‘ayot ḥinnuk məḥḡgarim uḥədarkey hanhalat hallašon*) carried discussions of reading, spelling, and vocabulary—but not a word on pronunciation. Nor did the anthology in the first issue of the Ministry of Education Hebrew teaching periodical *Oraḥot* (1962) do much better; Grinberg’s “‘Al bə‘ayat hora‘at ‘ibrit liməḥḡgarim” paid lip service to an ability to talk in the grocery store, but sees the issue of pronunciation as nothing more than having to choose between choral and individual repetition.

As recently as the Ministry of Education teachers’ guide (1974), one finds syntax and vocabulary, but neither phonetics or phonology. Even the productive theorist Haramati, while full of praise for the “linguistic approach” to teaching and such features as contrastive phonology, gives pronunciation the

7. Blanc (1961) and H. Rosen (1962) provide reliable phonetic detail with their courses.

briefest of mentions (under the topic "media") in his portrait of the New Ulpan Method (1972a), and not so much as that in his lengthy *Sugyot bəhanḥalat hallašon* (1972b).

In the U.S. things have been slightly better. A pioneer of Hebrew teaching in the early fifties, Rieger, proposed as part of his Jerusalem Method giving prominence to imitative pronunciation drills.<sup>8</sup> But, as Spicehandler (1957) observed, Rieger in actual practice, i.e. in his *Everyday Hebrew* (1954), failed to provide such drill; and in any case Rieger's methods had little impact in the U.S. or Israel (see Haramati, 1977, pp. 104ff). The first serious treatment of Hebrew teaching pronunciation to make a mark, according to Haramati (*ibid.* p. 317) was Yalon's (1966) *B'yad halashon*, a version of the then popular audiolingual method; using pronunciation drills in every lesson, pupils were expected to imitate rapid Hebrew speech without interference from the written word. But it was not based on any obvious awareness of the contrastive or general phonetic and phonological problems facing the American learner. Similarly, the audiovisual method *Habet ushma* designed by Cais and Enoch in the mid-sixties pays homage to the problems of pronunciation, insofar as it provides for specimen pieces of Hebrew to be read in a fairly informal way by radio announcers, but here too there is no grading or contrastive concern, nor an awareness of the scale of the discrepancies between everyday pronunciation and spelling.

An exception to all this is Haiim Rosen, whose *A Textbook of Israeli Hebrew* (1962) has an introduction replete with phonetic and phonological data but whose method of explication puts him outside the province of the ordinary learner or teacher.

### 4.3

For courses aiming at everyday speech and comprehension, we do not believe that the acquisition of a near-native accent is a serious possibility, given how little grammar or vocabulary even the most intensive course can offer. I cannot take the ambitious program of Keutsch (1976) seriously.

I would aim simply to guard against misunderstanding. In particular, the learner's perception should be raised to a point where he can confidently associate new words he hears with words he already knows, or at least look for them in a dictionary. This is especially vital at the second, "productive" stage of learning, as depicted in Rabin (1975). In fact, auditory discrimination of casual and even substandard pronunciation is especially vital to the learner of Hebrew, for whom this is often a second, not merely a foreign, language.

8. A thorough review of Rieger's approach and its impact (or lack of it) appears in Haramati (1977).

Problems in understanding and producing authentic Hebrew sounds stem largely from the gap between sound and spelling: the pronunciation of the letters 'alep, he, and 'ayin as zero or a glottal stop among many Ashkenazi speakers, the zero pronunciation of the šva symbol in many consonant clusters, the large-scale assimilation in voicing and devoicing, the zero pronunciation of yod before *i* by many, and more.<sup>9</sup>

By comparison, the vowels, consonants, suprasegmentals, and their role in differentiation of words are perhaps less crucial *per se* to the task of communication, viewed from an English speaker's perspective.

It falls to the linguist to expose these matters for two reasons: (a) the lack of one-to-one correspondence between letters and consonants, specifically 'alep, he, 'ayin, and yod among many Ashkenazim is generally branded as incorrect; thus, even those teachers saddled with this pronunciation are likely to ignore and even deny its existence; (b) assimilation of voice in consonants, even when acknowledged, is a complex—or at least a technical—matter by comparison with the familiar peculiarity of the pronunciation of 'alep, he, and 'ayin at ends of words.

I propose five focal areas, the first two geared to English speakers:

(i) Production and perception exercises on those consonant clusters not found in English (e.g. *pt, kx*), i.e. those involving clusters other than a non-homorganic obstruent + continuant. This is mainly a matter of improving the learner's perception. An Israeli hearing a novice's ə intervening in a cluster is unlikely to mistake it for the phoneme *e*. But production exercises can be as helpful as auditory training; the process of perception is known to depend in part on "sympathetic" articulation by the hearer.

Among such clusters are *pt, pn, ps, pš, pc, pk*, as in *ptuxa, pniya, psia, pšara, pcuim, pkak* ('open, request, stride, compromise, wounded, cork,' respectively); *bd, bn, bz, bc, bk*, as in *bdixa, bniya, bzuya, bcura, bkia* ('joke, building, despised, fortified, well-versed,' respectively), and so on.

(ii) Production and perception exercises for the voiced/voiceless distinction in Hebrew stops, which does not involve the absence/presence of aspiration.

For example, the pair *dor:tor* ('generation:line') is unlike the English pair *door:tore* ('door:tore'), to the extent that the Hebrew *t* is liable to be mistaken for *d*.

As with (i), perception rather than production is what counts.

The same sorts of exercise are worthwhile for the widespread devoicing of voiced obstruent phonemes at the ends of syllables. Thus, *xad, tov, gaz* ('sharp, good, gas') may be pronounced *xad̥, tov̥, gaʒ̥*, and confused with 'chisel, drum, rude,' respectively.

9. Some further, non-pedagogical treatments of Modern Hebrew phonetics are Chayen (1973) and Morag (1973).

(iii) Production and perception exercises for regressive assimilation of the feature  $\pm$  VOICE in obstruent clusters within the domain of a syllable.

For example, the noun *dfika* ('knocking'), derived from the verb pronounced *dafak*, is pronounced *dfika* or even *tfika*, the first consonant in the cluster being devoiced under the influence of the second. Only in formal registers where such initial clusters are avoided anyway is this assimilation absent. A case of regressive assimilation that voices rather than devoices is the noun *šgi'a* ('error') derived from the verb *šaga* ('err') but commonly pronounced *šgi'a* under the influence of the *g*.

Be it noted that too little research has appeared on this phenomenon<sup>10</sup> for one to be certain that regressive assimilation of voice in obstruent clusters is an accurate way of describing what is happening.

The teacher should be concerned not so much with producing correct assimilation in his students (though this will assist in perception) as with improving perception. Saying *d(ə)fika* will not confuse a native speaker, but to hear *tfika* and not to realize that it is morphologically related to familiar forms with *d-f-k*, or that it is to be found in the dictionary under the letter *dalet*, is to be at a grave disadvantage, particularly at advanced stages of learning, where independent productivity is crucial.

Exercises should emphasize not only words that are dictionary entries with an initial voiced + unvoiced or unvoiced + voiced cluster (e.g. *bt, bs, bš, bk, bx; df, ds, dš, dk, dx; kv, kd, kz*) but also the vast array of nouns and adjectives that develop an obstruent cluster (=šva vocalization) when inflected, e.g. *btuxim, bšelim, sgurim* ('safe, ripe, closed'). Note especially such ambiguities as *hiskir* for *hižkir*, *hiškir* ('mention, rent') and *tiskor* for *tižkor*, *tiškor*, *tisqor* ('you will remember, rent, skim'). The novice who utters such unassimilated forms as *hižkir* for *hižkir* ('mention') may possibly be taken as meaning *hisgir* ('hand over').

(iv) Perception exercises with dictation for the common neutralization of the 'alep/hel'ayin distinction, as in *ed* for 'ed, 'ed, *hed* ('steam, witness, echo'), and *tier* for *te'er*, *tiher* ('describe, purify').

As this pronunciation of *he* is a standard, but by no means the standard, pronunciation, and as keeping it distinct from 'alep and 'ayin will assist in spelling, I would perhaps not carry it over to production exercises.

The same applies to the pronunciation of *yi* as *i* or 'i among many speakers,<sup>11</sup> giving 'ire for *yir'e* ('will see'), *israel* for *yisra'el* ('Israel') and suchlike, and, most vexingly, 'itkabel for *yitqabel*, thereby creating systematic identity between past and future third person forms of the *hitpa'el* pattern,

10. See H. Rosen (1955) and Téné (1962).

11. The use of 'i for *yi* has a long and respectable history among Italian and Greek Jews, among others.

for speakers who pronounce both *yit-* and *hit-* as 'it. Here again perception, not production, is paramount.

(v) Production and perception exercises for a whole range of words or morphological patterns whose deliberate or rapid pronunciation is not what one might expect from their spelling. The following is just a representative sample: (1) Non-pronunciation of the *šva* in words like *pa:mim*, *ba:ya*, *šar* ('times, problem, remainder'). (2) *ta* for 'et *ha-* (accusative marker + 'the'). (3) *šu* for *šehu* in *mašehu*, *mišehu* ('something, someone'), etc. (4) *bidiyuk* for *bədiyyuq* ('exactly'). (5) *cixa*, *cixim* for *cəriḳa*, *cəriḳim* ('must'). (6) *-tti*, *-tta*, *-ttem* as an alternative to *-deti*, *-deta*, *-detem* in past tense forms like *lamadti*, 'avadtī ('I studied, worked').

(vi) Production and perception exercises for a curious aspect of consonant clustering: *ts*, *tš*, which are, to all intents and purposes, phonetically identical with the phonemically distinct *c.č*. Compare *tsisa*, *tsumat lev*, *betsefer* ('ferment, attention, school') with *cicit*, *comet*, *becim* ('tzitzit, intersection, eggs'), and *tšuva*, *tšuoṭ*, *dša'im* ('reply, cheers, lawns') with *čexi*, *čikčak*, *ček* ('Czech, in a jiffy, cheque'). The goal is, of course, not production but morphological and orthographic comprehension of the spoken word.

As an essential postscript to the foregoing proposals, we must echo the cautionary remarks of Wilkins (1972, pp. 54ff) on the real value of pronunciation drill. Little is known on the actual transfer of pronunciation from drill to real situations; and as for perception, context should, in principle, banish much of the difficulty in 'picturing' and morphologically recognizing first-time words. But the chief purpose of auditory training is to increase the amount of redundancy, a quality whose value to communication it is hard to overstate.

#### 4.4

If intonation is scarcely mentioned in Hebrew teaching materials—except perhaps to distinguish a question from a statement—it is because (a) the importance of intonation in making oneself understood is still minimized in general, (b) the symbols for intonation are not widely known, and (c) the facts for Hebrew are still less familiar, despite the pioneering work of Laufer (1974).

Marckwardt (1965) has drawn attention to the effects of intonation on a learner's perception: 'Any departure from the intonation pattern to which the learner is accustomed will so absorb his attention that he does not cut or separate the continuum of speech into its component elements.' As for the hearer, as Wilkins (1972, p. 45) observes, 'most people probably think that all intonational features are universal. They are not on guard for possible error and will not notice when one occurs.'

To my mind, however, correct intonation is especially vital in making oneself understood. I refer in particular to 'functional' or 'communicative'

aspects of language teaching. While there may be little intonational difference between the basic question/statement contrast in Hebrew and that of English (rise vs. fall), there is much to be learned about the distinctions in mood and attitude conveyed by intonation in the two languages. Thus, an English speaker, leaning forward to ask the cab driver to pull up at the next light, must often have wondered whether his intonation in *ata yaxol laacor bacomet haba* ("Can you stop at the next intersection?") made a polite or curt, a cool or urgent impression. How should one venture a *at muxana lisgor et haxalon* ("Do you mind closing the window?") with all firmness but without getting into a fight about it? Can *ani carix lalexet* ("I have to/ought to go") be made to mean both that one will go and that one is in fact going to stay?

#### 4.5

However great a part vocabulary seems to play in language teaching—and there are those, like Wilkins, who feel it has been pushed too far into the background—the semanticist and the lexicologist (dealing, respectively, with meaning and the specific meaning of words) generally feel totally irrelevant to the goals of teaching. Either, it seems, words are taught inductively or by brusque translation.

Thus, *'ahah* is rendered as "love," and both "like" and "love" as *'ahah* in Mansoor (1977); in Blumberg and Lewittes (1963), *'ahah* is "love" while *maca hen bə'eyney* is equated with "like." Both equate *halak* with "go" and "walk," and *nasa'* with "travel."

Even the adult learner is hard put to adjust to the idea that vocabulary is not normally a matter of one-to-one equivalence; and the teacher can benefit from linguistic treatments of lexicology.

The "synthetic" approach, describing aspects of meaning in terms of context or contrast with other words, is particularly useful with verbs and adjectives. (Good dictionaries give an idea, albeit a patchy one, of what such words "pertain" to.) Looking at syntactic and very basic semantic context, can, for example, the object of *'ahah* and *hibbeh* and the subject of *maca hen bə'eyney* be human, or inanimate? A finite clause, or an infinitive? Once we make the point that one can "*oheh*" a book or a candlestick or writing poems, it becomes less important that *'oheh* translates "like" as well as "love."

Similarly, *nasa'* plainly translates many instances of "go," and *halak* actually renders some cases of "travel" (e.g. "the moon travels round the Earth"), so it is more important—whether one favors audiolingual, cognitive, or grammar-translation methods—to stress the types of subject, and the types of adverbial, that collocate with these verbs than merely to translate them. Translation should be presented as a rough aid, perhaps by using inverted commas or capitals as a sign of the abstractness of translations, or by arrows

thus:  $x \leftrightarrow y$ . Altogether, a reassessment of translation by the teaching profession would stimulate linguistic research into the exact grammatico-semantic place of a vast number of near-synonyms and their related idioms.

The "analytic" approach to semantics, describing aspects of a word's meaning in terms of its inherent "meaning components," serves a purpose for all kinds of words, and especially so when a group of related words stake out their individual territories in the "semantic field" in a different way than their English "counterparts." For example, the verb *maggia*, translated as "reach, arrive, get to," as in *ze higia lexum gadol* ("it reached a large sum"), *higanu* ("we've arrived"), *kav šeš magia lebaka* ("route six gets to Baka"), could profitably be analysed as "x is at y, having moved to it or having itself served as a means of getting to it." It remains to the teacher to devise ways of presenting this notion, perhaps streamlining it in consultation with the linguist. By pointing up the basic—and often quite abstract—meaning upon which a group of words (sometimes thought of as unrelated) is drawing, the linguist hands the teacher a fascinating game; among words that spring to mind: *hapak* ("upturn, become"), *hizkir* ("mention, remind"), *yaqar* ("dear, expensive"), *pana* ("turn, request, go"), *ša'al* ("ask, borrow").

I would stress that these thoughts are relevant to inductively oriented teaching too. Even in the Ulpan where direct translation is eschewed, the learner will inevitably, on the basis of the sentence or two in which he is presented with a new word, begin to form in his mind a straight and simple translation of the word. He, too, needs encouragement in grasping the more abstract significance of words he meets.

Regrettably, lexicology is one of the orphan children of linguistics. Few linguistic textbooks do it justice, and even fewer full accounts of it exist. It is fortunate that the teacher is so often accustomed to think materials out for himself.<sup>12</sup>

## 5. Linguistics and the Analysis of the Data

Ongoing linguistic research frequently leads to improved analysis of the data, and, sometimes, to improved methods of teaching them. These can often be incorporated into drills, or into their overall organization, but it is in cognitive-based courses that they can be best appreciated, particularly as a new analysis often means a simpler, more tangible analysis that the student can directly relate to.

I will consider some representative reanalyses: from morphology—the Hebrew verb inflection, as seen by Ornan (1978); and from syntax—Modern Hebrew's equivalent for the verb "be," as argued in Glinert (1979).

12. See Landau (1972, 1974, 1976) and Dagut (1976).

## 5.1

Few things are more confusing to the learner, and needlessly so, than *binyanim* and *gəzarot* (the patterns of the verb), based as they are on a pronunciation quite unlike the modern Israeli system. No course-book known to the writer (with the partial exception of Rosen [1962]) has broken loose from the traditional arrangements of verb paradigms and noun patterns (*mišqalim*).

Ornan (1978, and in an experimental workbook, 1972) has evolved a phonetically-oriented analysis of the Hebrew verb. While not in total agreement on many details, I rate it a giant step forward in teaching methodology.

In a nutshell, Ornan's method means grouping together all the stems built up ("derived") from a particular root, i.e. noun stems (traditionally classed as *mišqalim*), adjective stems, verb stems (a version of the traditional *binyanim*).<sup>13</sup> Some of the roots themselves feature a "weak" letter, which suffers a special fate in all stems deriving from the root. (This is a generalization of the traditional *giʿra*.)

For verb stems, Ornan's proposals (in place of traditional *binyanim* and their tense paradigms) may be seen as amounting to several groups of paradigms, i.e. stems, the minimal number that need be known if the learner, given a few simple rules of phonetics, is to work out the various tense paradigms: (1) *gadal, godel, gdol* (2) *kam, kum* (3) *hagdil, higidil* (4) *hekim, hakim* (5) *hibit, habit* (6) *horid* (7) *gidel, gadel* (8) *komem* (9) *hitgadel* (10) *hugdal* (11) *gudal* (12) *nitkal, hitakel*.

Where there are two stems in a group, they are in fact the past tense and the infinitive forms. As for the future tense forms, they are built on the same stem as the infinitive, while the present follows the pattern either of the infinitive or of the past stem. Where there is just one stem in a group, it does service for all the paradigms.

These types of verb stem have roughly as unpredictable a meaning in relation to their particular root as the various types of noun stem do. Thus, *binyanim* do not regularly signify "intensive, causative, reflexive, passive" etc. any more than the various noun *mišqalim* regularly signify "instrument, place, action, profession" etc.

Ornan (1978) makes many more rudimentary proposals for teaching the phonetic laws behind such relations as (1) *diber: dibarti; higidil: higidalti; yašen: yašanti* (2) *dibra: sixaka; šamra: baxara; nimkera: nimxaka* (3) *gamar: gamru; hitgaber: hitgabru; sipar: sipra*. I will not reproduce the laws here.

13. I prefer, in fact, Rabin's (1978) notion of a "family" rather than a root, giving salience to such distinct groups as *yašab, hošib, mošab, hityaššeb* (relating to "sit") and *yiššeb, yiššub, mošab, hityaššeb* (relating to "settle").



Naturally, such reanalyses would benefit tremendously, if morphological error analysis were performed on Hebrew learners.

## 5.2

The linguist, in reanalyzing the data, is frequently confronted with a host of competing constructions differing barely in meaning. If he is to be of use for the teaching of active skills, he may well have to employ all that he knows about the linguistic system as a whole, in addition to his knowledge of the source language, in order to arrive at the most simple line of approach. This can be demonstrated in the pedagogically oriented analysis of the Modern Hebrew copula in Glinert (1979).

It is often stated that Hebrew lacks an equivalent of the verb "be" in the present tense, and that the pronouns *hu, hi* etc. sometimes act as substitute.<sup>14</sup>

Glinert (*ibid.*) investigates when exactly they are used, and when the pronouns *ze, zot* etc. are used instead of *hu, hi* etc.

(1) In "nominal clauses," i.e. those where both subject and predicate are nouns or noun phrases: (i) when the subject is a definite or indefinite common noun, e.g. *maccot* ("matzot"), *hakkappiyyot* ("the spoons"), the copula is usually needed, particularly in the former case. Thus *sukar hu klala* ("sugar is a curse"), *hakapiyyot hen matana* ("the spoons are a present"). *ze* etc. is sometimes an informal alternative; (ii) when the subject has a possessive suffix, e.g. *'axoti* ("my sister"), the copula *hu* etc. is usually used before a definite predicate and disregarded before an indefinite predicate. Thus *axoti cabarit* ("my sister is a sabra"), *išti hi hacayeret haxi tova* ("my wife is the best painter"); (iii) when the subject is a proper noun, e.g. *dan*, the copula *hu* etc. is used before a definite predicate, and sometimes before an indefinite predicate, e.g. *sara cayeret* ("Sara is a painter"); *sara hi hacayeret* ("Sara is the painter"); (iv) when the subject is a pronoun, e.g. *mašehu, 'ani* ("something, I"), the copula is, at best, occasionally optional. Thus, *ani (hu) ze šedibarti* ("I'm the one who spoke"); (v) when the subject is the phrase *ma še . . .*, as in *ma šemacxik* ("what's funny"), the copula is necessary. *ze* is an informal alternative to *hu*. Thus, *ma šemacxik hu šeelat haoged* ("what's funny is the question of the copula").

(2) Noun + Clause clauses<sup>15</sup> normally require the copula *hu* etc. Thus, *hakavana hi šeze gadal* ("the meaning is that this has grown").

(3) In Noun + Adjective clauses, the copula is especially dependent on the balance of the clause: (i) when a single adjective is predicate to a single noun,

14. A more detailed view of the question of whether the copula is exactly like the verb *haya* ("be") is Grosu and Berman (1976).

15. I will use "Noun" and "Adjective" rather than the more correct "Noun Phrase" and "Adjective Phrase."

the copula *hu* etc. is likely if the noun is indefinite and less common if it is definite, e.g. *xacilim hem teimim* ('eggplants are tasty'), *habiskvitim retubim* ('the cookies are wet'). (ii) when the subject is heavy, the copula *hu* etc. is very likely, and not so when the subject is light. Thus, *habiskvitim šenatnu li etmol hem rekuvim* ('the cookies they gave me yesterday are mouldy'), *xacilim teimim yoter* ('eggplants are more tasty'). (iii) the copula is ruled out where the subject is a pronoun, e.g. *ata tipeš* ('you're stupid').

(4) Noun + Adverbial clauses: (i) when the subject is a common noun, the copula is optional (*hu* etc.), but preferred when the adverbial is heavy. Thus, *hasveder baaron* ('the sweater is in the closet'), *hasveder šehveteta hu baaron* ('the sweater you brought is in the closet'). (ii) when the subject is a proper noun or pronoun, the copula is unlikely, e.g. *dan bepariz* ('Dan is in Paris').

(5) Clauses where the subject is itself a clause (e.g. *ze šehiskimu, lehaskim* ('the fact that they agreed, to agree')) require the copula *ze*, except of course when the predicate features a verb. Thus, *ze šehiskimu ze lo buša* ('the fact that they agreed is no disgrace').

I will not consider here the use of copulas in questions, also dealt with in Glinert (1979).

The foregoing details of the copula, themselves highly condensed, must clearly be further simplified for most teaching purposes. The linguist must take account of the source language as a whole, other properties of the target language that may aid or hinder the learner, plus general learnability.

If the copula were to be taught exactly as above, one would burden the learner with distinctions between proper and common, definite and indefinite, heavy and light, pronominal and non-pronominal which, though individually easy or familiar to the learner, are difficult as a whole. Moreover, it is my impression from these data, complex and fuzzy as they are, that to deviate from them would not raise too many native eyebrows.

I propose that the copula be disregarded after pronouns in all cases; and indeed in all N + N, N + Adj, and N + Adverbial clauses. Only in clauses where the subject or predicate themselves are a clause (as in (5) above) or contain a clause (cases of heavy subjects, and (1v)) should the copula be taught: *hu* etc. in most cases, *ze* in (5).

The advantages of this are that (a) it is easier, when used to employing no copula, to understand one when it appears than, conversely, to be suddenly faced for the first time with a no-copula clause such as *xacilim teimim yoter* ('eggplants are more tasty'), which might well be mistaken for a mere N + Adj phrase; (b) the choice of gender and number in the copula is in itself a burden, even given the general distinction for gender and number in the Hebrew verb, witness the tendency of native speakers to use the non-inflected copula

ze; (c) it is probably much easier to learn not to translate something that exists in one's native tongue than to insert something that does not exist in it. On this point, see Wilkins (1972, p. 194). My impression is that the omission of "be" in Hebrew is not hard on the English-speaking learner.

In all these matters, I would stress again, error analysis would be of invaluable help. Mere contrastive studies by themselves tell one very little, and serve to direct research into error or to provide possible explanations thereto.

## 6. Linguistics, the Learnable, and the Functional

More and more teaching theorists are concerning themselves with the learnability of what is taught, the order in which it is taught, and its very necessity for communication.

### 6.1

Cook (1978) highlights the "fallacy about the relationship between communicative competence and the stages that lead to that competence . . . The adult progresses through a series of complete language systems, rather than learning one discrete system at a time . . . Thus 'Present Perfect' in the adult may not have been learned as a discrete item at one period of time but may have evolved out of an earlier, more rudimentary system; the child may not learn 'complaining' separately, but evolve the function of complaining out of a set of more primitive functions." To avoid creating "an incomplete Frankenstein's monster who cannot function till all the separate limbs are assembled rather than a child who is an organic whole at each stage of development," Cook proposes "to take heed of the sequences that learners go through in acquiring a second language."

Cook mentions the work of Bailey *et al.* (1974). But of special interest are the ideas of Littlewood (1977a) on simulating the phenomenon of "*Gastarbeiterdeutsch*," the German of foreign workers, learned by exposure to the day-to-day needs of communication, "a situation in which processes of natural selection are free to determine which communicative devices of German are mastered, and which ones are ignored, at successive stages." One example is case inflection, usually taught early on but here acquired relatively late, perhaps because it is mentally taxing as well as communicatively near-redundant (given the utilization of a fixed word order). Littlewood is too mindful of the presumed social undesirability of respectable adults communicating in a German lacking case endings (and suchlike) to recommend "deviance as a planned aspect of language learning"; it would, besides, involve a teaching turnabout to dwarf the audiolingual revolution. But he does see *Gastarbeitersprache* as a clue to

improved sequencing and to finding contexts in which a particular grammatical feature is truly necessary and meaningful.

Of course, Littlewood's ideas raise further unwieldy (and perhaps familiar) problems: is "natural" necessarily easiest or can it be improved on? Can learners take to the idea that what is allowed today (perhaps only casually) may be banned tomorrow, or perhaps teachers do this anyway when they gradually step up selectional restrictions on the use of words, e.g. proceeding from 'iš through 'iš vs. *gever* to 'iš vs. *gever* vs. 'adam (various terms of "man, person, male").

## 6.2

Looking for "natural foreign language acquisition" in Israel is no doubt particularly difficult, in that foreigners there are usually literate and course-oriented. (Arab workers are no guide, as Arabic is structurally so akin to Hebrew.)

But linguistic considerations suggest the following recommendations at least:

(1) As Rosen (1962) suggests, the tense forms of the so-called *qal* pattern are particularly difficult and should be delayed. In fact, as Ornan (1978) has shown, the *qal* is the only pattern having three different stems; in all other patterns of the verb, the past and infinitive are the basis for the present and future forms.

(2) There is little justification for 'eyn early on as an alternative to *lo* ("not"). Quite apart from the difficulty in sorting it out from the 'eyn meaning "there is not," its positioning and inflection are peculiar, seen through English speakers' eyes or indeed in the general context of Modern Hebrew structure.

(3) The infinitive (with or without *lo* "not") as a command is a far simpler alternative to the inflected imperative or future tense forms.

(4) The gender inflection in numerals, bizarre to English-speakers and the opposite of other Hebrew inflections, need not be stressed when the numerals are first introduced, especially the inflection of 11–19, which is often neglected nowadays informally.

(5) The very use of 'et, essential though it is in most registers, is so taxing and ubiquitous to learners yet so redundant that one might do well not to insist on it initially.

(6) One is tempted similarly to delay another irregular, un-English construction, the suffixation of prepositions (e.g. 'itti, *kamoḳa*, *mimmennu* "with me, like you, from him"), which confuses many a learner and which, in the absence of any obvious alternative construction, comes as an all-round obstacle.

But research is needed to determine whether native speakers could understand the provisional use of Preposition + Subject Pronoun (e.g. *kəmo 'atta, min hu, 'aharey 'ani*) and indeed whether the learner could subsequently adjust to *kamoqa, mimmennu, 'aharay* and so on.

### 6.3

In conclusion, the linguist should regard himself not as a fountainhead of knowledge on language teaching but rather as having data to offer and analyses to suggest that may profitably be tested by psycholinguist and instructor, in laboratory, street and classroom—in short, a catalyst.

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